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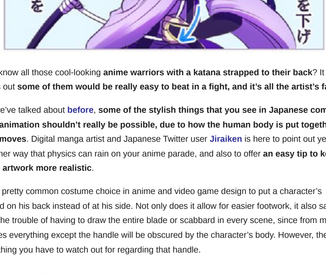
Anime sword fighting isn't like reality. Why? Biomechanics (again)

Casey Baseel Nov 18, 2015



You know all those cool-looking **anime warriors with a katana strapped to their back**? It turns out **some of them would be really easy to beat in a fight, and it's all the artist's fault**.

As we've talked about **before**, **some of the stylish things that you see in Japanese comics and animation shouldn't really be possible, due to how the human body is put together and moves**. Digital manga artist and Japanese Twitter user **Jiraiken** is here to point out yet another way that physics can rain on your anime parade, and also to offer **an easy tip to keep your artwork more realistic**.

It's a pretty common costume choice in anime and video game design to put a character's sword on his back instead of at his side. Not only does it allow for easier footwork, it also saves you the trouble of having to draw the entire blade or scabbard in every scene, since from many angles everything except the handle will be obscured by the character's body. However, there's one thing you have to watch out for regarding that handle.

> 日本刀好きの方にはぜひ知ってほしいマメ知識。 **pic.twitter.com/JD37Y8is1U**
>
> — ジライケン@web漫画家 (@jiraiken) **November 16, 2015**

Jiraiken points out that **many people draw the sword's hilt as sticking up above the character's right shoulder**. After all, if he's right-handed, when the time for action comes all he has to do is reach back and grab it with his dominant hand. And sure, positioning the handle there does make it easy to grab the handle…but not so easy to pull out the blade.

Trying to draw the sword straight over the top of the right shoulder means the character can only move the handle as far as his elbow joint will allow, which probably isn't going to be enough to unsheathe anything longer than a dagger, so it certainly isn't going to be very effective with the sort of oversized edged weapons that have been in vogue for the last two decades of anime and video games.

Instead, Jiraiken says, **for a right-handed character, the sword's handle should be against the left shoulder-blade**. That way he can employ the range of movement of his right shoulder, and also use his left hand to yank the scabbard cord, then slide the case back as he pulls the handle forward.

"Remember, should you run into a warrior in a dark alley who's itching for a duel and has a sword on his back, if he's got the handle on the wrong side, he won't be able to draw his weapon, and you can fight him off just by throwing rocks at him," says Jiraiken, proving that he takes a practical stance in both comic artwork and life-or-death combat.

If you're interested in seeing more of Jiraiken's artwork, his currently serialized manga, *Wildcard*, is not only free to read online, but also has an English version **here**. And for those of you hoping to avoid any gaffes by just drawing your hero with his katana on his hip, don't forget that there are **rules for that**, too.

Related: ***Wildcard (Pixiv Comic)***
Source, images: ***Twitter/@jiraiken***

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